



## **Foster & Kinship Caregivers**

### **How Do I QPI Today?**

**All children deserve quality parenting in all aspects of their lives.** Parent each child based on the child's culture, religion and ethnicity, special physical or psychological needs, and unique situation including sexual orientation, gender identity and family relationships.

**Relationships between caregivers and biological families are the strongest indicators of child safety, permanency and well-being.** As a child's foster parent, your relationship is not only with the child, but also with the birth parent as a partner in a mentoring, supportive, nurturing and honest manner. Use visits and joint attendance at child's appointments to enhance relationships by sharing information and conveying support and respect for the birth parent.

**Accepting a child or sibling group into your home is accepting them into your family.** Quality parents provide love and acceptance of a child in their care and include the child in all aspects of family life such as celebrations, vacations, spiritual practices, and other family activities.

**Participate fully in the care of the child.** Accompany the child to court, agency meetings, family visits, medical, dental, psychological and other appointments and consult with providers to ensure the needs of the child are being met and provide emotional support to the child as needed.

**Encourage the child's strengths and individuality.** Provide opportunities to develop the child's interests and skills with developmentally appropriate, normal home and community activities.

**Understand the physical and emotional impacts of trauma.** Children that have experienced abuse and neglect may not respond to regular behavioral interventions. Caretakers must be skilled in dealing with the effects of trauma and parent with trauma in mind. Contact your worker or child's therapist for assistance or resources. Recognize many birth parents have experienced physical and emotional trauma themselves which may result in ineffective responses or interventions.

**Actively support the educational success of the child.** Participate in school activities and meetings. Encourage the child to participate in extracurricular school activities. Document child's school history with photos, progress reports, copies of programs, awards, and certificates.

**Work in partnership with the agency.** Fully support the permanency goal of the child as well as the goal of providing a safe, stable and quality level of care until the child is reunited with his or her biological family or placed in a permanent home.

**Help the child bring together past, present and future.** Maintain medical and school records, photographs, and mementos of special events and achievements in the child's life. Assist and support lifebook work with the child.

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## ***Adoptions How Do I QPI Today?***

***Model honesty, transparency and respect*** - Do so with the child, foster parents, and adoptive parents in all contacts and communications. Be forthcoming, accountable and responsive to needs of child, foster parents, and adoptive parents.

***Include foster parents in permanency planning for the child.*** Foster parents should be included in discussions, meetings and court hearings to share information about the child and ideas for permanent homes, even if they are not adopting the child.

***Gather information about the child from the foster parents.*** Foster parents can provide the best information for the day-to-day needs of the child. Ask them to provide information which can be used in identifying the best family for a child, in providing for a smoother transition, and in assisting the adoptive parents to successfully parent the child.

***Help foster parents adopt if that is the permanency plan.*** Many children are adopted by their foster parents but foster parents may need help in understanding and making that decision.

***Support connections and relationships.*** Be sensitive to the relationships between children and their foster parents when a child is moving to an adoptive home. Even though foster parents have decided not to adopt, they still care about the child and will experience some grief and loss and children will also maintain feelings about their previous foster parents and other significant individuals.

***Follow up with interested families.*** When a family expresses interest in adopting a child in your caseload, get back with them as soon as possible—even if another family has been chosen for the child!

***Promote informed decision making.*** Thoroughly research each child's history and provide all information to prospective foster/adoptive parents. Spending quality time with children in your caseload will help you to understand their strengths and needs, their interests, and what they want in a family.

***Provide feedback.*** Keep foster and adoptive parents informed about the child's situation, provide updated information about the child's needs, and feedback in how they are meeting the child's individual needs.

***Be responsive and flexible.*** Provide ongoing support, planned respite and needed services to families to prevent a disruption or crisis from happening BEFORE it is too late! When there is a crisis or concern, respond as soon as possible. Return the call, go to the home, find needed services. Work with foster/adoptive parents when planning home visits, meetings or appointments for the child...they have schedules too!

***And Most of All,*** take every opportunity to acknowledge, support, and thank foster parents and caregivers providing quality care to children in their home.

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## **Clerical Support Staff**

### **How Do I QPI Today?**

***Set a tone of respect, support, and partnership.*** Remember each plays a critically important role to a child in our care and is fulfilling a parenting role to a child who is need of quality care.

Greet parents and foster parents warmly and with a smile, truly listening to their needs and connecting them with the appropriate person to meet their needs as quickly as possible.

Offer parents and foster parents to make copies of their documents.

While a visitor waits for staff, help them to be comfortable. Direct them to a phone, water fountain, and the restrooms.

Give a compliment. A simple comment about a person's appearance or attitude can brighten their day.

Direct calls appropriately. If you are not certain the caller will be able to reach the worker explain the best way to leave a message, put the caller through to the supervisor, or determine if urgent and if so, find someone else who may assist.

***Facilitate and expedite services to foster parents and caregivers when possible.*** Process all paperwork as promptly as possible. Be willing to expedite paperwork in critical circumstances.

***Convey commitment and professionalism.*** Be just as welcoming to the visitor who arrives at 4:29 pm as you are to visitors arriving throughout the work day.

***And most of all,*** Take every opportunity to thank foster parents and caregivers for their service to children in need!

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## **Child Protective Services**

### **How Do I QPI Today?**

***Model honesty and transparency.*** Throughout the course of your work with a family, be truthful and respectful about your responsibility and actions to be taken to assure safety of the child and support their ability to safely meet their child's needs.

***Seek information from appropriate source.*** To expedite services and meet the needs of the child entering care, engage the parent in providing critical information about the child i.e. health, educ., allergies, medications, and documents such as birth certificates, tribal affiliation cards, social security and medical cards, photos, etc.

***Engage parent in establishing emotional safety/security.*** To help reduce trauma to the child, with the parents explain to the child he/she will be staying with a safe family and exactly when they will have their first visit. Ensure the child has favored comfort items or toys with them.

***Maintain respect for parental role.*** Commit that you will call the parents from the foster home to give an update on their child and an opportunity to talk with the foster parents and child. Encourage them to have additional child specific information ready for the foster parent and to be able to comfort their child if needed.

***Model information sharing.*** Share basic information about the foster caregivers with the biological parents and child, such as first names, family size, other children in the home, etc.

***Seek to minimize trauma to child.*** While transporting the child to the foster home, provide the child with as much information about the foster family as possible to reduce anxiety about going to a stranger's home. If possible, take 5 minutes, pull over at safe location and call foster parent providing them with positive information about child and also allowing child to hear their voice and talk with them.

***Respect child's need for honesty.*** Upon arrival at the foster home, tour the home with the child, assist in unpacking and reassuring the child with information appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding. Provide them with what they can expect to occur over the next 72 hrs., including who will be contacting them and when, activities to take place, etc. Stay with the child until they are comfortable. Don't rush.

***Provide support to foster parents.*** Share all information with the foster parents needed to care for the child, such as, child's favorite foods, likes and dislikes, sleeping habits, medications, allergies, etc. Provide the foster parents with you and your supervisor's contact information and other contact numbers they may need (HDU worker, FC worker, Supv.)

***Model continuity of relationships.*** Call the biological parents from the foster home to encourage a brief conversation between the adults that is focused on the child, his/her needs and likes, and facilitate a short phone conversation with the child, if possible and remind all parties when they will see each other for a visit.

***And most of all,*** take every opportunity to acknowledge, support, and thank foster parents and caregivers for providing quality care to children in their home.

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## **Foster Care**

### **How Do I QPI Today?**

***Model expectation for honesty, transparency, and respect*** – Do so with the child, birth parent and foster parent in all contacts and while clarifying each team member’s role in ensuring quality care for the child.

***Provide the foster family all information you have about the child*** - As soon as information and documents are received share with caregiver. Photos of the birth family and child’s belongings will reduce anxiety and trauma. Ensure the foster parents have 24 hr contact information for yourself and supervisor.

***Ensure timely medical care*** - The child’s initial examination must occur within 5 days of custody. If Medicaid is presenting a payment issue the agency can pay for this first medical exam, or reimburse the foster parent.

***Recognize financial support needed***- Expedite supports (financial, community, resources, etc) to foster parents by promptly completing and submitting Fast forms, placement authorizations, and special board assessments.

***Support Connections and Relationships***- Within a week of placement, meet with the child and also schedule a meeting between the biological family and foster parents to meet and discuss the child’s needs, preferences, education, medical history, bedtime routines, etc.

***Support Team Concept***- Foster parent participation in the Family Team Meeting is critical; their input and support is needed. Take action to support their participation.

***Support Parenting Partnerships***- Encourage participation of both foster parents and birthparents in child’s medical and dental appointments, IEPs and any other meetings related to the child. When possible, allow foster parents to schedule appointments while considering birth parents’ schedule.

***Support Quality Family Visitation***- Consider schedules of all parties and location when scheduling family visits. Encourage foster parents to provide update on child and allow family to ask questions. Support quality visitation by having guided questions and/or activities ready to use if needed.

***Acknowledge grief and trauma***- These are normal responses experienced by each child and caregiver when moves must occur. Seek to reduce trauma by providing sufficient time and planning for every move based on the child’s individual needs and by providing follow up contact with each whenever possible.

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## **Family Services**

### **How Do I QPI Today?**

**Model Relationship Building-** Engage the family by building a relationship based on trust, honesty, and transparency.

**Convey Respect for Family-** Approach the family in a manner that shows you are seeking and interested in learning about their history beyond the investigated allegations.

**Be Accessible-** Confirm the family has contact information for you and your supervisor. Return calls within 24 business hours.

**Open Communication-** Be honest with the family when assessing their needs and reasons for agency involvement. Include the family when determining needed services and scheduling appointments.

**Identify and Secure Needed Supports-** Seek community resources that will address the needs of the family and coordinate these services with the family. Assist them in keeping a calendar of scheduled appointments and ensure they have transportation, childcare, etc.

**Recognize Role of Extended Family and Community-** Include extended family, friends and community supports in planning with the family around safety and in Family Team Meetings. Assist the family in understanding the value of extended support systems. Have the family identify who serves as extended family or support.

**Monitor Status of Family-** If the family has not contacted you in a week, check on them. It can be hard to reach out in a crisis. Speak with service providers regularly especially around issues of mental health, substance abuse and trauma.

**Always Act In The Child's Best Interest-** If safety cannot be assured and removal is imminent, actively and honestly prepare the family, including the child. Collect important documents, clothing, comfort items, family photos and medications the foster parent may need for the child. Provide all known information to the foster parent considering placement.

**Anticipate, Recognize, and Reduce Trauma-** To help reduce the trauma when placing a child, find a safe location and call the foster parent, allowing the child and foster parent to talk in preparation for the child's arrival. Upon arrival, call the parents to update them on child's status and allow them to discuss the child's preferences, needs, allergies, etc with the foster parent, and if possible, to also speak with and reassure their child .

**And Most of All -** Take every opportunity to acknowledge, support, and thanks foster parents and caregivers providing quality care to children in their home.

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## **Home Development**

### **How Do I QPI Today?**

***Set the tone for a professional partnership.*** The initial conversation sets the tone for relationship between potential caregivers and the agency. Answer questions rather than asking questions that appear judgmental. Encourage orientation attendance. Return inquiry phone calls within one working day.

***Develop the types of homes needed in your region.*** Review regional data and recruit the types of homes most needed in your region, e.g. teens, sibling groups, medically fragile newborns. Communicate these needs during the inquiry call, at orientation, and throughout and following the certification process.

***Clearly communicate expectations of caregivers.*** Share agency expectations at orientation, throughout pre-service training, home study assessment, and after certification. Ensure caregivers understand the needs of children and reunification efforts are primary and that they are to fully support a child's permanency plan.

***Clearly define roles.*** Explain the roles and responsibilities of team members and the permanency process including foster care worker, birthparents, foster parents, CASA, child and parents attorneys, hearings and family team meetings.

***Share information with caregivers.*** Obtain as much information as possible about a child needing placement. Share this information honestly and without judgement when contacting potential caregivers for placement.

***Assist caregivers in understanding the individual needs and well-being of a child in their care.*** Explain quality parenting is based on the child's individuality including religion, culture, ethnicity, race, special physical or emotional needs, gender identity or sexual orientation. Ensure foster parents are engaging the child in normal childhood activities based on the child's age, interests and abilities.

***Assist caregivers in developing skills to parent children in care.*** Ensure caregivers clearly understand child development and the effects of trauma and possess the skills required to provide quality parenting to children in foster care. Assess and secure additional training and resources needed to further develop skills.

***Assist caregivers in developing skills to support birth parents.*** Explain the importance of caregivers supporting birth parents and participating in family visits. Encourage caregivers to keep birth parents updated on children's progress and needs. Encourage caregivers to include birth families in special events whenever possible.

***Provide ongoing support to caregivers.*** Visit a new caregiver's home as soon as possible following the 72 hr hearing. Provide all foster parents with emergency contact numbers for HD worker and supervisor. Make support visits when families are in crisis. Connect families to community support. Offer support when children move and allow families time to process moves before calling for additional placements.

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***You are a professional member of the team.*** Act in a professional manner with the agency and other partners. Share all relevant information promptly. Respect the confidentiality of information related to the child and the biological family, only sharing with those needing information.

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